

Marshall University

Marshall Digital Scholar

0064: Marshall University Oral History
Collection

Digitized Manuscript Collections

1999

Oral History Interview: Mary Ellen Scrivner

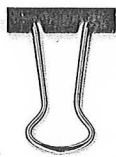
Mary Ellen Scrivner

Follow this and additional works at: https://mds.marshall.edu/oral_history

Recommended Citation

Marshall University Special Collections, OH64-685, Huntington, WV.

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Digitized Manuscript Collections at Marshall Digital Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in 0064: Marshall University Oral History Collection by an authorized administrator of Marshall Digital Scholar. For more information, please contact zhangj@marshall.edu.



RELEASE FORM

Deed of Gift to the Public Domain

I, Mary Ellen Scrivner, do hereby give to the Oral History of Appalachia Program of Marshall University the tape recordings and transcripts

of my interview(s) on Nov. 14, 1999.

I authorize the Oral History of Appalachia Program of Marshall University to use the tapes and transcripts in such a manner as may best serve the educational and historical objectives of their Oral History Program.

In making this gift, I voluntarily convey ownership of the tapes and transcripts to the public domain.

Megan E Farrell (Agent of the Oral History of Appalachia Program) Mary Ellen Scrivner (Donor)

Nov. 14, 1999
(Date)

RELEASE FORM

Deed of Gift to the Public Domain

I, Mary Ellen Scovner, do hereby give to the Oral History of Appalachia Program of Marshall University the tape recordings and transcripts of my interview(s) on Nov. 14, 1999.

I authorize the Oral History of Appalachia Program of Marshall University to use the tapes and transcripts in such a manner as may best serve the educational and historical objectives of their Oral History Program.

In making this gift, I voluntarily convey ownership of the tapes and transcripts to the public domain.

Megan E Farrell (Agent of the Oral History of Appalachia Program) Mary Ellen Scovner (Donor)

Nov. 14, 1999
(Date)

**Interview of Mary Ellen Scrivner and Charles Allen Scrivner
Conducted by Megan E. Farrell**

MF: This is Megan Farrell, recording with Mary Ellen Scrivner. It is November 14, 1999, and we're in Huntington, West Virginia.

So start with just an outline of where you were born, where you've been...

MS: All right, I was born in Princeton, West Virginia, in 1923. Lived there until 1930. Then we moved to Portland, Oregon. My youngest brother was born there. Then we moved back to Princeton for a year—we were in Portland a year, and then moved back to Princeton for a year. Then we moved to Cortez, Colorado for three years; then we moved to Huntington. And we've been in Huntington since then except for brief periods—in the Army, and in that kind of thing. So that's about the basics.

MF: All right, how about education while here? Did you start school while you were in Princeton?

MS: I started school in Princeton, went to Mercer Street School. The principal's name was G. G. Avill. We called him God's Greatest Animal, for his initials. He was very strict. We were not allowed to play on the grass. We had a blacktop or something playground that we played on. And every day we marched out of school, the principal would play march music, and we would line up in our class rooms at the door and march out by two and two, out the door and down to the sidewalk before we were allowed to disperse. Very, very strict principal (laughing).

And my two older sisters always told me when going to school, that you had to hurry because we were going to be late, and if you were late three times you had to go the principal's office, and he had a spanking machine.

MF: A machine?

MS: A machine, that turned the paddles with wheels and the paddles went around and spanked you and I was petrified of being late. Ran all the way to school (laughing). That's what big sisters are good for. But I went to school there until I was in the fourth grade. I was in the fourth grade in Portland, Oregon, and then back to Huntington for the fifth grade and the sixth grade in Colorado in the one-room schoolhouse.

MF: Didn't you ride a horse to school there?

MS: Yes, well when we first moved there, we stayed out on the ranch with my grandparents. Out in the drylands. And I rode a horse to school. It was about probably two miles. No, that was the one-room schoolhouse, was about two miles, and I walked to that school. But I was only there about two months. And then we moved and I went to school in town, but we lived outside and I rode a horse with my older sister. She always got to ride in the saddle and I had to ride behind (laughing).

MF: Did you think that was at all different, I mean, did you think that seemed strange to you then, to be riding a horse to school?

MS: I thought it was great.

MF: Well, I got the impression that before, your family was sort of ...

MS: Well, yeah.

MF: Not as if you would have been used accustomed to riding a horse around, except for fun. Is that true?

MS: Yes, well when we lived in Princeton, up until we moved to Portland, we had, we were, not wealthy, but we had enough money. My mother had her own car and my father had a car, and Mother had a laundress that came in on Monday to do the laundry. Took it home with her to iron and brought it back on Tuesday. But of course, having a maid, or having help in the house, was not uncommon back then, because you could get somebody to come in and help you just for room and board and that kind of thing. We had had an easier life, although, it wasn't, we didn't ride the horse because we didn't, it was not a financial thing, it was just that that was the way that you got to school if you lived out in the country. In those days people didn't have cars to run you around like we do today. We didn't carpool, we lived at that time, that farm was like probably three or four miles outside of town I guess, and all the kids around there all went to school riding a horse. They had at the school, which was in town, stalls for the horses, because that's the way people got to school. So it wasn't a financial thing, it was just the way it was done.

My grandfather's farm, out in the drylands, it was in Yellow Jacket, Colorado, which was in Montezuma County. They had, this was the drylands, so they didn't have much water. They had a little man-made pond that the horses and cattle could get their water at, but they had to take a wagon and a big barrel and go several miles to a creek, a free-running creek where the water was clear to get their drinking water. It was fun to go with Granddaddy to get the water. That was where my uncle Charles, who was my great-uncle, he moved out there with his mother, my great-grandmother, and he had a girlfriend. They were engaged to get married. They went for a ride one day in the buggy and he drove over a great big stone in the road and she fell out of the buggy. He stopped and waited until she got back in, took her home and called off the marriage. He said he wasn't going to marry any damn fool woman that couldn't even ride in a buggy. (Laughing) And he never got married. He was a bachelor.

MF: Why was your family all migrating there?

MS: The first one that went there was Uncle Charles and his mother, great-grandmother Maxey. They went there because Uncle Charles had lung trouble. And the climate was recommended. And my mother and father moved there when Sarah was born, they lived there. They went out and Daddy taught school for a year. Then they moved back to Princeton, where I was born and where my first younger brother was born. Then later we moved back out there. My aunt Effie moved out there and great-grandmother Maxey took three of her grandchildren out there with her whose parents had died. Her husband had died before she would have got there, so I don't know, they just all sort of migrated west. They had the Homestead Act then. Which gave, you could claim 160 acres of land, I think. You had to live on it for five years and improve it and then you got title to it. So that's the way they got their land out there. When Granddaddy left there, he sold his farm for \$25,000, which back in 1940, when he sold it was a lot of money. He did very well. So it was a good opportunity for people who wanted to move west. It seemed like Daddy's family all moved around more than Mother's family did. Mother's family all stayed right here in West Virginia. Daddy's family, his father, moved to Colorado, another brother moved to Missouri, one moved to Texas, you know, so they just, they seemed to have more wanderlust. Mother's family stayed right here in West Virginia, mainly around Mercer County, Mercer and Summers, and down in there.

MF: They were all in farming?

MS: Yes. They were farmers, for the most part. Mother's one brother, Uncle George was a carpenter, and Uncle John was a cabinet maker. They worked together a lot, building houses and things. They were in Beckley and Princeton, around in there.

MF: Is there still some of the land they had in the family?

MS: There is some of the land that Daddy's family had, the Maxeys, still own some land in Spanishburg. The original farm, that they settled on is still there, that they settled on back in the early 1800's. That's the only

one. The farm that I remember where my grandmother and grandfather lived was a dairy farm outside of Athens, where Concord College is. When Granddaddy started it, it wasn't a dairy farm, it was just a farm. Later they went into the dairy business. We'd go visit and we'd get to go bring the cows in in the evenings to milk them. And they'd even let us try to milk them, I never got very good at it, Sarah did, but I never did quite manage that (laughing). They had a nice farm. They had a very good-producing farm, and everything they did. Grandddaddy was a blacksmith and had a blacksmith shop, and they had a henhouse and an icehouse and a cornhouse and a great big barn for the cattle and a hayloft that we'd go up and play in. It was a real neat place to visit. I told you, I think, that we'd go out and lick the salt cakes for the cows. We weren't too proud (laughing).

MF: Everybody needs some salt.

MS: Right. And there was a great big creek down in front of the house and a great big tree, and we had a swing that would swing out in front of the creek. That was where you went down and up the other side to get to the cemetery. We went to that cemetery four or five years ago. It's still there and you have to go through a farmer's land to get across to this cemetery, it's on this farmer's land, but we have to go through his yard and his driveway and out across his field and open the gates and drive across the countryside (laughing) to get to the family cemetery, where my grandparents and great-grandparents are buried.

MF: It was just the family cemetery?

MS: Yes. The Boling or Williams family cemetery.

MF: I'm thinking I went through Athens a couple of months ago to go to Pipestem, but I kept thinking there was some name I was looking for, somebody we had had a conversation about that I was related to, somehow, distantly.

MS: In Athens?

MF: Maybe. I thought so. Maybe I'm making up stories in my head.

MS: That's where Laura went to school, at Concord College, and that's where my mother and father went to school. That's where they met, Concord College. There's nobody there living in that area that's closely related to us now. All my mother's brothers and sisters, of course, are passed on. There are not too many of their children around anymore, but.

MF: Around, as in around here? Or alive?

MS: Well, Emmajean Huffman, who lives here is my cousin. Of our generation, there are not too many left. But none of them are left down there. The farm was finally sold when Grandmother died. Granddaddy died when I was about two years old, so I didn't know him, but Grandmother Williams died in 1940. Her son, William Williams, ran the farm after that for a while, probably..

MF: Did he start running it when his father died then? Or did she run it by herself?

MS: No, he took it over when, in fact, they had an agreement that the land was deeded to him with the provision that he would make a home for his mother as long as she lived, you know, that kind of thing..

MF: They had to get that in writing?

MS: Yes (laughing). In fact, they had the same deal with my father. I found the records where the land had

been deeded to him for a dollar. I don't think Daddy wanted to do that. He was not a farmer, and it wasn't what he wanted. So that didn't last very long. Then Uncle Will took it over. His wife baked the best butterscotch pies you've ever eaten. Have you ever eaten one?

MF: No, I've never had butterscotch pie.

MS: They were so good. Of course they had the dairy farm and they had all the eggs and cream and butter and everything to make them. So, Grandmother lived there. She didn't get along with Aunt Sally, Uncle Will's wife. She spent a lot of time visiting with her other children, and she spent a lot of time at our house. Mother was the youngest child in the family, and she and Mother got along and well, and Daddy and Grandmother Williams got along so well. So we had a room in our house that was Grandmother's room, and it had a feather bed on it. Nobody used that room but her when she came to visit. It was on the first floor in Princeton. That was her bedroom. I used to love to sleep with her on that feather bed. I had been warned if you tinkle in the feather bed it's really, really, you know, you don't do that. (Laughing) I was always so afraid, I think I just half-slept all the time because I was afraid I was going to mess up Grandmother's bed. Then she had a big long stick and I'd help her make the bed in the morning, and you'd take this big stick, because you'd plump it up, you know, and take this big long stick and smooth out the bed. It was fun when Grandmother came to visit.

We used to tease her because she was kind of forgetful. She would take off her glasses and put them on top of her head and she could never find her glasses. We thought that was so funny (laughing). Gosh, now I don't think it's so funny! She would darn our socks, and if the socks were brown or tan or black, she used the same color thread, it didn't matter (laughing). Our socks, Megan, you wouldn't believe. We wore long underwear in the winter, you know it comes down to your ankles. Then you had these cotton socks that came up above your knees and you had to wrap the bottom of the underwear around your leg real tight and pull your socks up over it and get your socks up without pulling your underwear up. Then pin them up on your underwear.

MF: Was it really cold?

MS: Yeah, it was cold. We had to walk to school. Our house was probably, oh a good mile, maybe more from school.

MF: Did you think the winters were more severe when you were younger? It seems like there's always more legendary stories of six foot snow drifts and...

MS: I think they were colder, because we dressed more warmly to go outside. Then, we didn't have snowsuits and that kind of thing back then. We had long underwear and long socks.

MF: Maybe now you never have to get out of the car and everything is climate-controlled so you don't have to dress as warmly.

MS: Right. Clothes were much, you know, I can remember going shopping with my father. There was a shoe store in Princeton, Kettran's...Katrons? Anyway, my father knew the shoe store owner and they had a little pair of red patent leather mary jane shoes in the window and I just fell in love with those red shoes. I wanted a pair of red shoes in the worst way. Daddy said, well come on, we'll go in and get you a pair of red shoes. If it had been my mother she would not have even considered this subject. But Daddy said, come on, so went in. Unfortunately, they were Mother Goose shoes and those were just advertisement for Mother Goose shoes. They didn't really sell them. Girls didn't wear red shoes back then. They wore black shoes or white shoes or brown shoes and that was it. Nobody...

- MF: What are Mother Goose shoes? A brand?
- MS: Yes, Mother Goose was the brand. Oh, it wasn't Mother Goose, excuse me, Red Goose. Red Goose shoes. That's why they were red. I was so disappointed.
- MF: Was the display model not your size?
- MS: No (laughing). Unfortunately, I've always had a good sized foot. Those weren't my size.
- CS: (Entering) Okay, Megan, what do you want to know?
- MF: Well, do you have good stories about your Appalachianess that you'd like to share?
- CS: About my what?
- MF: Being from Appalachia.
- MS: He didn't know he was from Appalachia (laughing).
- MF: Well, you're Ohio, anyway, which doesn't count (laughing).
- CS: I'm from West Virginia.
- MS: He was born in West Virginia.
- MF: But wasn't your family from Ohio?
- CS: One of them. Part of them.
- MS: His father.
- CS: The other half was from West Virginia, up on Mud River.
- MS: Well, now, the Gillinghams were from Ohio, weren't they?
- CS: The Gillinghams were from Ohio, that's right.
- MS: That's your Mother's side.
- CS: Yes.
- MF: Well, we were talking about how she wanted some red shoes she didn't get.
- MS: When I was a child. I was about five years old.
- MF: You were kind of a Daddy's girl, weren't you?
- MS: No, I was really more of a Mother's girl, because Rebecca and Sarah, Rebecca was a Daddy's girl because she was the first one. They did a lot of things together, and then when I came along, Rebecca and Sarah, Rebecca was five years older and Sarah was three. Sarah started school a year early, so for about four years, I was at home with Mother by myself. We used to do things together. She liked to go, there was a place between Bluefield and Princeton called The Green Pig. It was a barbecue, they had really good

barbecue. Mother and I would go there for lunch while the other kids were in school. I did more things, I was more a Mother's girl, than a Daddy's girl. Daddy was very strict.

MF: But he would buy you red shoes?

MS: Oh yes, he would. He took us to Bluefield to see the first talking picture show. I don't mean that, but he was strict. When Daddy said my name, I had to say yes sir and go see what he wanted. There was none of this "huh" and "yeah" "later".

MF: Do you remember what the picture show was?

MS: No. What was the first talking movie, Scriv? Was it, it wasn't Al Jolson, what was it?

CS: I don't know, close to Wings down in that time, some time.

MS: I just remember he took us, we skipped school one afternoon and went to see the first talking...

CS: Are you sure it wasn't Al Jolson?

MS: I don't know. I keep thinking it was Al Jolson, but I'm not sure.

CS: I think it was.

MS: Al Jolson was a singer. We were not allowed to do a lot of things on Sunday. We were not allowed to go to movies on Sunday, all the time I was growing up. When we lived in Princeton, I always say that we had chicken and dumplings and the minister's family for dinner every Sunday, because it seemed to me like that's what happened. Mother and Daddy were good friends with the Minister and his wife. They had a daughter my age. They did frequently come to have dinner with us on Sunday. We were not, you didn't do any work on Sunday. We would set the table the night before and Mother would do most of the preparation the day before for Sunday dinner. That was the only thing you could do on Sunday, was cook.

MF: Was this in a Methodist church?

MS: Yes. The minister and his wife had a daughter about my age. (Laughing) We would sit at the table and we'd get tickled about something, we'd start giggling. We were not supposed to giggle at the table, at the dinner table. And of course, if you're not supposed, it makes it that much worse. And we were generally Daddy would eventually say, well, you know, I think the girls have their giggle boxes turned upside down. You may be excused, and we'd get to leave the table. We couldn't stop giggling, and there was absolutely nothing funny, you know.

MF: So was the church a big part of your life when you were a kid?

MS: Yes. We went, Mother and Daddy were very active in the Church. Sang in the choir. We went every Sunday. Mother was struck by lightning once in the church.

MF: Literally?

MS: Yes.

MF: I've never heard that before.

- MS: Oh yes, Mother was struck by lightning twice. Once at home and once in the church.
- MF: How? What happened?
- MS: I don't know, back in those days, they must not have had lightning rods or something (laughing), I don't know. But people... being struck by lightning was not as unusual as it is today.
- MF: Really?
- MS: Well, the first time, I don't know which came first. But once Mother was sitting in a rocking chair and she was knocked out of the rocking chair.
- MF: Inside the house?
- MS: Inside the house. And the other time, in church, she was jolted out of the pew.
- MF: You'd think that would be a bad sign.
- MS: Well, you'd think you'd be safe in church, wouldn't you? (Laughing) That's why I feel that these people, you hear about bus wrecks on their way to church or on their way to Sunday school, and you think, that's not quite right...(laughing)
- MF: Was she hurt?
- MS: No, she was not really struck. Probably more of what she was sitting on, maybe, was hit or something, but no, she was never injured.
- MF: That's very strange.
- CS: Somebody didn't believe she was telling the truth. (Laughing) Turned out she wasn't telling the truth...
- MF: Maybe not.
- CS: Well, I've got a claim to fame.
- MF: What's your claim?
- CS: I have a relative, as near as we can determine, is a relative that had the biggest still in this area.
- MF: Really? I just looked through some...
- CS: Do you know where it was? Right in the middle of Ritter Park.
- MF: Really? That wasn't Ritter Park, or was it already Ritter Park then? It was just undeveloped property?
- CS: That was a long way out of town, cause the town was, back in those days, was Guyandotte. Guyandotte started before Huntington did. They had the biggest still in the area. I got a newspaper article...
- MS: Is that Appalachia enough?
- MF: Yeah, that's pretty good. I was looking through some other Oral Histories today and there were several

people who, still living, these were taken in the 70's with the living people who had personal knowledge of prostitution, gambling, all the vice that was going on in Huntington in the '20s.

MS: Oh, Second Avenue was the red-light district.

MF: Really...its sort of difficult to imagine Huntington was ever that lively (laughing).

MS: It was...

CS: Especially on a Saturday night.

MS: I don't have any personal knowledge of this. Scriv might have, (laughing) they said the girls sat in the windows with the red lights o.

MF: You're nodding...personal knowledge?

CS: Now that was...we'd see them sitting in the window, driving up and down Second Avenue. That was when we were in college.

MS: Yes, that was in the 1930s and 1940s. Well, 30s. It wasn't there after the war was over.

CS: Not after the war, but it was there early in the war.

MF: Why did the war make it go away? All the men out of town?

MS: The war made a lot of things go away. The war changed a lot of things. It was the beginning of the Women's Movement, almost, you know because all the men were drafted and taken into the service and the women went to work.

MF: Rosie the Riveter?

MS: They never did give it up?

MF: That must have been strange though. I've learned that they wanted women to give it up when the men came back. But that's why they created the GI bill, they wanted to try to give the men some reorganization.

MS: Made school available, for everybody. That was the beginning of everybody trying to go to college. Everybody that could, because before that it wasn't available to just everybody. It changed the social morays, the sexual morays, everything was more relaxed, after the war. There were dress codes, practically, I mean, women didn't wear patent leather shoes in the winter. You didn't wear brown and white saddle shoes, you didn't wear white shoes before May 31 or after Labor Day. You know, it was very, it was ridiculous (laughing). But that was, you know, everything was much more relaxed after that. It wasn't all for the good.

MF: Well, you were in the WACS, weren't you?

MS: Yes.

MF: And that's why you were in Michigan?

- MS: Well, we moved there. During the war, Daddy went up there and worked in a war plant. Worked at the Willow Run Bomber factory. I was still at home, and I went up there too. Sarah and I were both at home. Sarah taught school and I worked as the secretary to the Superintendent of Schools while I was there. Then, Mother and Daddy just stayed there a year and they moved back to Princeton and I stayed on up there. My best friend and I joined the WACS together. My parents were totally against it, because the WACS didn't have the best reputation in the world. They didn't want me to do that. So I joined the medical corps, because they needed people to take care of the wounded soldiers that were coming back. They were sending all the nurses overseas, but they needed people in hospitals here. So I used that as an excuse to go.
- MF: For the good of the country?
- MS: Yes. So I was in for a couple of years. Really enjoyed it.
- MF: Did you see a lot of wounded people?
- MS: Mm-hm.
- MF: That was another thing I saw the other day, a special on the History Channel about the war and the soldiers coming back and how, it's a war, but it never occurs to people the great number of people that came back with arms missing and legs missing. The movie that won all the Oscars, "The Best Years of Our Lives" that had the guy with the artificial hands. He had made an instructional video first, and then became a movie star out of it. But I had never thought about how...when you look back the whole attitude seems to be that of the whole country rallied around. It was almost so jovial and celebratory that you kind of forget that so many were coming back with emotional problems and physical problems.
- MS: There were so many paraplegics. They were paralyzed. In the hospital, they took care of them on the battlefield and then sent them back behind the lines for further work. Those who couldn't be sent back into battle and eventually came home into the hospitals here. They opened large army hospitals all over the country. That's what we worked in. We got the ones that needed long term care. A lot of badly burned and ones that had shrapnel wounds which wouldn't heal. They would get infections in the bones and it took a long time for them to heal. Ones that would require...and they didn't have the medicines that we have now. They didn't have the antibiotics that they have now. Penicillin was just brand new, sulfa drugs before that, and then penicillin. Just before I got out they were starting with the e-mycins. I remember the pills cost a dollar a pill. Mother had to take three a day, and back then three dollars a day was a big hunk of money.
- MF: I guess you didn't have the prescription plan in those days.
- MS: No.
- MF: Well, what else can we talk about here? How about stories about the flood in Huntington, because I always enjoyed those stories.
- MS: Scriv can tell you stories about the flood.
- CS: Well, a lot of water in the '37 flood. We lived on 12th Avenue and 9th Street during the flood and my grandparents lived on 5th Avenue and 20th Street. Of course, we had no flood wall. So when the water started coming up, everybody thought they were going to stop, you know. Didn't think they were going to go very far. They just kept coming and kept coming. Finally, they were between 4th and 5th Avenues downtown. Just about the alley. That's all uphill.

MS: The river was that wide at that time.

CS: Yes. All up on 5th Avenue, if you went on up, of course, the ground gets lower. Up on 20th Street it was up to the second floor, about 3 or 4 inches from getting up on the 2nd floor of my Grandmother's house.

MF: Were they there?

CS: Oh, yeah (laughing), they weren't going to leave. Of course, they'd lost all power, you had no electricity. You had no heat.

MS: And it was what, February?

CS: It was January.

MF: Oh really, I didn't know what time of year it was. That would make it a lot worse.

MS: Yeah, the snows in the mountains were melting, you know. The river was going up.

CS: The river was going up. Of course, they didn't have all the dams and everything that they have today. Which are not flood control dams, but they do control the height of the river.

MS: There's an article in today's paper about that.

CS: We had to take them off, the Coast Guard came around and made everybody get out. All the older people, anyway. We took my grandparents off of the porch roof, into the boat. My uncle stayed there in the house to keep anybody from looting. There were boats available, but you couldn't have a motor on the boat because they would create waves, which would create more damage.

MF: So you were canoeing?

MS: Rowboats, yeah.

CS: Rowboats, canoes, (laughing) rafts, anything. You know, just any kind of thing you could get. A float... And you know, it was really, really messy, when the flood waters finally went down, cleaning the house.

MF: Did they make it to your house on 12th Avenue?

CS: 12th Avenue and 9th Street, we were about 6 inches of being in on the first floor. This was all backed up. Ritter Park was completely under water. We had a boat there which my brother and I would row around. If you'd hear somebody holler that they wanted out, we'd row and take them up to wherever dry land was.

MS: I guess Fourpole Creek flooded, didn't it?

CS: It was Fourpole Creek that had backed up. There was no place for the water to go, the river was backed up. That whole area, down there, probably, let's see, 11th Street you start going uphill a little, up higher, so it was clear up 11th Street on down below 8th Street. It didn't get in.

MS: Did you all stay in your house?

CS: Yes. We stayed in the house.

MF: How long did the water stay that high?

CS: It was over two weeks.

MF: And did life just stop in that time?

CS: Yep.

MF: Everybody just sat in their house and waited?

CS: Well, no.

MS: You got out and rowed around (laughing).

CS: You'd go out and do what you could. You'd get out and walk downtown, or if you had your car parked up out of the flood water well then you could drive downtown and look at the flood water downtown (laughing). But there was a lot of work to be done.

MS: Well, yeah, there were pianos floating around and all kinds of junk you know. We lived up in Highlawn, which was higher, we lived between 24th and 25th Streets. The water got up about knee deep in the first floor. There were Mother and Daddy, and myself and my two younger brothers and Sarah and Aunt Grace and her son, Herschel, all living in the 2nd floor of the house which had three rooms and a bathroom. So we lasted one day and Daddy said "Out! Everybody's leaving!" (Laughing). Daddy stayed there and Aunt Grace and we left on the last bus that went out of town. We went over to somewhere on the Southside and got the bus and it took us up to Milton. We had to get out there and get in a boat and go across an expanse of water, and then got a bus on the other side and went to Hinton and spent a couple of weeks with relatives. We were going across this water around Milton, and I looked out and saw all the grass and everything and I commented on it and the man said, "that's the tops of the trees, that's not grass." (Laughing) The water was so deep there.

CS: We opened the kitchen door into the basement, and if you wanted to go to the restroom, to the bathroom, the first thing you did, you went down there and you got a bucket of water. You carried the bucket of water up to the 2nd floor and then when you finished you poured that water in, which gave you enough water pressure that it would flush.

MF: So it would get out of your house, but it was probably just floating back out on the street right in front of your house?

MS: Pretty much (laughing.)

CS: Well, no it was in the sewer system,

MS: But the water was backed up in the sewer system.

MF: You would think it would all end up in the same place.

CS: My mother's sister, they had a grocery store, on 20th Street and 3rd Avenue, which was well under water, down that far. They lived on 21st Street, right where McDonalds is, right there on the corner, they had a house there. When the water had started coming up, they had taken a lot of food out of the grocery store up to their house.

- MS: Canned goods and stuff.
- CS: Canned goods and all that kind of stuff, and put it up in their attic, along 5th Avenue. When it finally came up and flooded the store, they all had to get out, so they lived over, they stayed at our house, and there was at least four in that family, I don't know how many of the boys, what the boys did. Our family, which was four people, and my grandparents and they were all staying at our house. We were sleeping anyplace. You know, and we had plenty of food, because all we had to do was go up to their house and go to the attic and bring it back, you know, and cook it. Then after the flood, they went back to the grocery store and of course, all the canned goods and everything, all the labels had come off the cans. So, you had to be real careful and you boiled the cans first, but you pushed the top of it and if it would sink in, well then you knew that it was no good because air had gotten into it somehow. So, you'd go over there and pick up several cans and go back and fix one, and you were really surprised with what you got (laughing).
- MS: Green beans and pork and beans and brown beans (laughing)
- CS: Brown beans (laughing)...
- MS: Whatever it was, you ate it...That was true of a lot of the stores in town, you know, and they all sold this stuff.
- MF: Did you get it at a discount?
- MS: Oh yeah, they sold it for less, sure. But you had no idea what you were opening, you know.
- MF: That might be kind of fun.
- CS: But it was ...
- MS: But the mess after...
- CS: Oh, the mess afterwards, cleaning it up..was you can't believe it.
- MS: It was just awful.
- CS: We had, grandparents had a big upright piano, and it had been in the flood all the time, so ruined. It was ruined, so my brother and I told them, well all right, we'll take an axe to it and get it out of here. And that was the hardest job I ever had in my life. That wood, real sharp axe wouldn't even dent it. It tried to tear that wood up..
- MS: That piano in there was in the flood, but it didn't get under water, because they laid it flat up on a table. The water didn't, but it was in our house.
- MF: Strong table.
- MS: Oh, well, it was a good dining room table.
- MF: Didn't you tell me though, I thought you had some story about, one of you did, about playing games with other people that were in upper stories of their houses, across the street...
- MS: We had a neighbor next door that, the houses were not very far apart, and we played Canasta...not Canasta, we played Monopoly. We'd yell out the window to each other, cause they were upstairs in their house and

we were upstairs in ours. There was a window with a landing, steps went and then turned, and we'd yell out, where we'd moved and what we were doing, you know. We played Monopoly by remote control. Of course, the boys, my two younger brothers had tin cans telephones. They'd make a telephone and string a wire and somebody would have a tin can at the other end.

CS: A string between it.

MS: I mean a string, yeah.

CS: Punch a little hole in the bottom of it, no lid on the other end, and put a string in there and tie a knot in it so it wouldn't come out. Take another can, and then we'd pull those and we'd be in the other room, and you'd pull that tight and you could talk into the can and you could hear it in the other can.

MF: Now I even think that I had something like that when I was a kid. I guess the rope was so short you're standing right next to them so you can hear them talking, so I kept thinking, does this really work?
(Laughing)

MS: That's the way I felt. The houses were 20 feet apart, I don't know, what are they on the southside?

CS: Ten feet.

MS: Same thing up there. I'm sure we could hear each other. The boys had those tin can telephones and they talked back and forth. But it only took one day of that for my father to say, out!, everybody out! Because we had one room piled full of furniture and two rooms we were living in and the bathroom. All those people.

MF: Did that same time, did it flood all along the Ohio everywhere? Or was it just especially bad right here?

CS: Oh, no.

MS: No, it was all up and down.

CS: All up and down the Ohio.

MS: In today's paper it was talking about the river back then was so many feet wide and one foot deep. Now, they have dams that keep the water at a navigable level. But then, everywhere, there were no flood walls and the water just spread out everywhere. I don't know why, I guess we'd had 40 days and 40 nights of rain or something (laughing) plus the snow was melting in the mountains and running down. So I guess from Pittsburgh on down it was flooded.

CS: They used to have traffic lights, you might remember this, I don't know, but the traffic light was in the center of the street, the center of the avenue and the street. They only had one light

MF: It was four-sided?

CS: Four-sided, right.

MS: Megan remembers those.

CS: And they were hanging, and they'd hang down so far. On 16th Street, right at the entrance to the College, we, in a boat, in a skiff, had to lay down to go under that light. Just barely. That's how high the water

was.

MS: It was the same thing up there at 3rd Avenue and American Car and Foundry up there where there's a low place, 26th Street? Traffic lights were in the water. Lots of water.

CS: Lots of water, everyplace.

MF: Lots of mud.

CS: It was two or three weeks, I forget, I don't remember

MS: At least two weeks.

CS: A good two weeks, before it started going down.

MF: So it was because of that they built the flood wall, then?

MS: The flood before that was 1913, was the worst flood before that. They had had smaller floods in between, but the 1913 was the worst until '37. After that, they got smart and built the flood wall.

MF: It just seems like, you as my grandparents, most people's grandparents, the flood is always a point of reference...

MS: The flood and the war.

MF: Anything else happen around here?

CS: My granddad had a little bit to do with Appalachia. He worked at American Car and Foundry for over 50 years. He was a pattern maker. They made coal cars.

MF: Somebody who is involved in coal... I told Grammy apparently I'm not

MS: You're not directly related from coal miners sorry...

MF: Even though they were in the southern part of the state, nobody was involved in coal...

MS: No, they were farmers. Had to feed the coal miners. Sciv's got a medal somewhere, some kind of a something he got when he worked up there for production.

CS: We don't know if this is something American Car gave out or whether it was a medal they had given him for the years that he had worked. He was there for better than 50 years.

MS: And a pattern maker, they worked with wood, and they have to make the patterns for the mills to roll.

CS: He made the wheel pattern. For the wheels on the car.

MS: So they have to be very good woodworkers.

MF: Like tool and die work?

CS: Yes. He made that cedar chest in our bedroom, made that for my mother when she was a girl growing up.

- MS: When she was 14, I think she told me.
- CS: I've got some of his tools out there. Not very many of them. The other grandfather on my Dad's side was a shoemaker. That was in Barnesville.
- MF: How far away is Barnesville from here?
- CS: Well, Barnesville is almost to Wheeling. So you're talking three hours.
- MF: I just wondered, I wasn't even sure what part of the state it was in. If it was close to the WV side, or farther west.
- CS: Close to Wheeling.
- MF: So how did your dad end up here?
- CS: I don't know. We've asked that question, just the other day. I have no idea how they came, how he came to Huntington.
- MF: Did your grandparents, they came too?
-
- MS: He came by himself. What did he do before he came to, when he was in Barnesville?
- CS: He worked in a clothing store, remember?
- MS: Oh, yes, that's right.
- CS: That picture that we've got.
- MS: That's right. That's what he did when he came here, so maybe he applied for a job or heard about a job or they contacted him, who knows. He was treasurer of the company?
- CS: He met mother after he came down here.
- MF: And they stayed here?
- MS: Yes, he had a good job.
- CS: I think, I don't know this for sure, but I think his mother was still living.
-
- MS: When he came here? Yeah, because Clara stayed there with her mother.
- CS: Yeah Clara stayed there, but I don't remember exactly when she died.
- MS: Clara stayed there and then after her mother died, she came to Huntington. Clara was his father's sister, the only other child. The Scrivners were not very prolific (laughing). James had one son, and John, he had a son and a daughter, and the daughter didn't marry and he had two sons and that's it.
- MF: And then those sons don't have any sons either. How does it feel to be the last of a dying breed?
- CS: Well, all of this genealogy that we're working up is going to end up with you and Kerry, because there

isn't anybody else.

MF: I know.

CS: Unless Kevin would get married and have a male, a boy. My brother has a son. He's not married, and so he's not going to have any children.

MS: They did adopt a daughter, he and his first wife. But she's a girl, so she won't keep the Scrivner name.

MF: Well, I'll name my first child Scrivner.

MS: Would you please?

MF: Sure.

MS: That's the way Christopher, Chris Evans, he's Christopher King Evans.

MF: There's a lot of that on my Dad's side. Everybody has recycled names.

MS: Well, not only that, there's your father, your grandfather is Joseph Michael and his first son is Michael Joseph and then Joe is Joseph Michael, how did Paul get in there?

MF: I'm not sure.

MS: But then Paul did the same thing with his kids didn't he?

MF: Yeah, everybody of my generation has Michael or Joseph as a middle name. Almost all of them, except for the juniors, Paul Jr. There's Patrick Joseph. Sean Casey is just an Irish name, I don't know where that came from. But Kevin Michael, Mark Joseph, but then Martin McGuire was my grandmother's father's name. And Vinny, Vincent Gardner, Kevin just picked Vincent, they let him name the kid. But Gardner is Anita's maiden name. The same thing with the others. All the girls have Elizabeth or Anne somewhere in their name. Except for Kerry, but she's named after her own mother.

MS: This genealogy stuff, there are more Elizabeths down through history...everybody, every female has an Elizabeth or a Jane in her name, somewhere. I was going to name Chelee— my grandmother's name was Mary Jane, mother's name was Mary Vada, and mine was Mary Ellen, so I was going to name her Mary something, but I couldn't come up with anything.

CS: Your mother's name was Melissa.

MF: Where does Vada come from? Was that popular name?

MS: I don't know. I don't know of any other Vada, except for Vada Blue, who is a black baseball player.

MF: Probably not related.

MS: I know of no other Vada.

MF: I've always thought it was very pretty and exotic sounding. I always liked it.

MS: And that's what she was called, she wasn't called Mary Vada, she was just called Vada. Daddy was called

Blaine, his name was Edgar Blaine, but he was called Blaine or E.B. I don't know why they were called by their middle names. I know why Kevin is, because his first name is Thomas, we had another Thomas, Sarah's Thomas. Their family were all Thomases.

CS: Is that where that came from? (Laughing)

MS: We didn't want to call him Thomas, because Tommy was Thomas, and they came to Huntington to visit every summer, and we thought that would be too much.

MF: Why did you name him Thomas then?

MS: Because I liked that name. (Laughing)

CS: We should have named him Granville.

MS: Yeah, called him Granny (laughing).

CS: His grandmother called him teakettle.

MS: His initials were T.K. We went to church one time, they were laughing at church one day. Kevin was in preschool and he went to Sunday school and had a new teacher, and she didn't know his name and so she asked him what his name was, and he was shy, finally, she said she knew his grandmother and asked what his grandmother called him and he said "teakettle." They were laughing and telling his grandmother about it later.

MF: The only things we haven't touched on much are courting and holidays. Anyone have any good stories about courting?

MS: Well, I can tell you that my grandmother, Mary Jane Boling Williams, and her father, Jesse Boling, he got mad at the family, their name was spelled B-O-W-L-I-N-G and Jesse was kind of a cranky old man, apparently, from all I've heard about him, and they got into a family argument, so he dropped the "w" from his name and from then on it was B-O-L-I-N-G.

MF: He showed them.

MS: Yes. Then he wasn't related any longer. (Laughing) His daughter, Mary Jane, was the youngest in the family. My grandmother, and she was courting with Allen Williams, and granddaddy didn't think he was good enough for her. Of course, she was the baby and he didn't think anybody was good enough for her, so they eloped. She packed her suitcase and her sister took it out and hid it in the field the day before. Allen came to get her before daylight, and they took off on a horse and along the way her suitcase fell off, it was tied to the back of the horse, and they didn't realize it fell off, so anyway, they went into Princeton or Bluefield and caught a train. They went to Sullivan County, Tennessee, and went to the Preacher's house. He was out cutting hay in the field, so they went out and got him and came in and he married them. They stayed a couple of days or overnight and then went back and they had left their horse at a persons' stable, and the man was supposed to take care of it. The man hadn't given this horse any food or water or anything, for the several days they'd been gone, so it was half dead. So they got back on their horse and went back home. Went to his house, his mother's house, and they stayed there. That Sunday they went to church. After church was over, her father, old Jesse said, Mary Jane are you coming home for dinner? She didn't say anything, so he said "Are you coming home for dinner today?" and she said "Is Allen invited too?" and he said, "Well, all right" so she went home. And then he gave them part of his land to build their house on, so Allen could build Mary Jane a house, which he did, and they said after that nobody

could do anything to please Jesse like Allen could.